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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to describe the principles on which a Polyvalent Adult Education Center is based, its purposes, its functions, and organization, as well as its operations. It has been written with urban communities in mind. The point is made that the existing provisions for adult education are inadequate to meet the growing and diverse needs. The polyvalent approach to adult education is based on the following principles: (1) An adult worker's educational needs are multiple; (2) Educational opportunities should be available over the entire period of the worker's life; (3) The main emphasis in such education is on his "functionality"; and (4) Different educational subjects are usually given in an integrated and inter-dependent manner. Steps in planning the program include: (1) identification of objectives (2) identification of needs in the community and identification of groups that need education, (3) analysis of job requirements, (4) development of an integrated curriculum, and (5) selection and training of a part-time staff. (CK)

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ON
POLYVALENT ADULT EDUCATION CENTRES

POLYVALENT ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE: CONCEPT & DESCRIPTION

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PREFACE

This paper attempts to describe the principles on which a Polyvalent Adult Education Centre is based, its purposes, its functions and organization, as well as its operations. It is not meant to be a description of a "model centre", as it is believed that there is no such thing as a "model centre". Polyvalent Adult Education Centres will have different forms from country to country and from area to area. Each Centre must have its own *identity* and will, as it grows, acquire its own characteristics and organizational patterns, depending upon the priority given to different local needs as well as upon economic and social and political conditions.

This paper has been written with the urban communities in mind, but the basic principles of Polyvalent Centres can be equally well applied to rural conditions and needs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is increasingly evident that the existing provisions for adult education are inadequate to meet the growing and diverse needs.

Various means and institutions are serving adult education objectives. The extension of the regular school system to include adults is one widely-utilized means, but it has its limitations. Technical colleges are usually available only to the young, or offer specialized courses to adults who have already completed elementary or secondary education. University programmes are also somewhat limited, either because of their sophisticated level or because the universities cannot always offer a wide range of specialized courses to meet the needs of workers seeking further training. 'On the job' training, where it exists, caters to a large extent for apprenticeship or similar technical needs. There are numerous other out-of-school activities for adults, serving particular needs or covering specific matters or subjects. All these school and out-of-school programmes and activities have considerable value, but in general reflect either the "comprehensive" or the "fragmentary" approach to adult education.

The schemes of adult education suffer either because the concepts evolved take a too comprehensive view of adult education or emphasize a single aspect of the life of an adult individual. Statements like "learning to live", "education for responsible citizenship", "community uplift through community action", "education for life and through life", "people's education", etc., while entirely sound, have tended to give a global and comprehensive notion of the scope of activities and also give the impression that adult education is nebulous and too abstract. Such concepts are unlikely to move hard-headed government officials, who control the finance, or business executives or planners of economic and social development to allocate adequate funds in support of such work. The other kind of concept is to view adult education as consisting of activities which are organized with a stress on a single aspect of life. Thus, for instance, adult education might be described as "adult literacy", "social education", "recreational activities", civic education, vocational or technical training, workers' education with a bias to trade unions, agricultural extension, etc. Such a list and a plethora of objectives gives the impression that adult education is lacking in cohesion and purpose. Thus there has been an un-coordinated effort in developing education for adults, neglecting either one or the other aspect which might be essential for the total development. Adult education carried on such a fragmentary concept is far

from constituting an integral whole.

There is today a trend in adult education to rationalize, organize, institutionalize, such programmes and activities which take into account the multiple needs of adults and are aimed at total development of the mind, of the congnitive skills, the technical abilities and attitudes. Many adults, particularly workers, need not only to fill certain "gaps" in their education, but also need very different knowledge and additional skills, or, in other words, need—in education and training—something more comprehensive. Most workers, during their working lives, need opportunities for further training. Changes in work procedures, the emergence of new techniques, modifications in industrial or professional relations, vertical or horizontal mobility in jobs, new responsibilities, a move to a new setting, the growing availability of leisure, new facilities for cultural life, membership in a trade union or cooperative, etc.—all call obviously for new knowledge and skills. The traditional assumption that an individual acquires in his youth the bulk of knowledge and skill required for his livelihood and full participation in his society is no longer valid—even if he is lucky enough to have attended a school. The rapid changes in today's world oblige modern man to continue his learning throughout his lifetime.

There is therefore a growing awareness of the need to build such a type of adult educational institution[1] and to develop programmes in which different educational subjects or areas are inter-related and integrated, in which general and vocational education, civic and cultural education, economic and scientific education, are linked, in a functional relationship, with development needs and objectives, with constant and continuing individual awareness.

A Polyvalent Adult Education Centre is an institution intended to meet these multiple education needs of a working man. The education it provides is structured in such a way as to be sufficiently flexible and dynamic to meet new and changing conditions.

2. PRINCIPLES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF POLYVALENT ADULT EDUCATION

The "polyvalent approach" to adult education is based on the following principles :

1. An adult worker's educational needs are multiple, and to develop his full personality and his participation in the life of the community he must have *continuing access* to education and training which includes academic, technical, cultural, civic and other components.

1. Specialized and professionalized institutions of adult education are found in some countries. Some specific examples are: workers' and people's universities in Yugoslavia, socialist academies in Czechoslovakia, CUSES in Nancy (France) and shramik Vidyapeeth in India, etc. These institutions, although different in concept and organization, offer programmes of integrated adult education.

2. Educational opportunities should have no terminal point, but should be available *over the entire period of the worker's life.*

3. The main emphasis in such education is on his "*functionality*"—those needs which will improve his situation as a worker by providing education and training related directly and indirectly to job requirements (in a broad sense).

4. Different educational subjects are usually given not as separate "fields", as they are in traditional academic programmes, but in an *integrated* and inter-dependent manner.

5. There is not one single entering level, but the programmes permit "entrance" of adults *on very different levels*, according to their experience, abilities and knowledge (irrespective of how they obtained it).

6. The curricula in the traditional sense does not exist, but different subjects which can be *linked* or *combined* in many different ways by the individual adult learners themselves.

7. Programmes are based on *real* needs—both those of the participants and of the community as a whole. Such needs are assessed through surveys, interviews, and broad consultations among the various groups of a community (workers, adult learners, trade union officials, managers of industry and other enterprises, and government administrators, for example).

8. As a result, programmes are necessarily *flexible*. They may be of short or long duration and of varying content and form. They are designed to carry on from the level of educational attainment already achieved. In short, they are *tailor-made* to the needs of the participants and the community.

9. This flexibility is reflected in many aspects of the Centre's functions :
   —The teaching is done by 'specialists' (part-time or full-time) rather than by school-teachers or full-time pedagogues they vary according to the type of courses called for
   —The classes may be held in different locations around the city (perhaps right in the factory) in a place *convenient to the adult students*
   —Financial support may come from various sources : the government municipalities, enterprises which will benefit from better trained and and better educated employees, or even partially from the adult learners themselves.

10. In order to contribute to the development of the overall "personality" and creative attributes of the participants, there should be available at each Centre, as a complement to the basic programmes offered for economic or social motives, units which deal with both cultural and civic edu-

cation. These activities might take a number of different forms, but each should be related to the 'felt needs' and established according to workers' wishes and the interests of the community.

11. Collaboration with other agencies—social and educational organizations, government administrations, enterprises, business, cooperatives, cultural institutions, mass media—is vital and necessary.
12. Parallel to the provision of educative programmes, a Polyvalent Centre could also concentrate on :

i) the *evaluation* of its methods and the effectiveness of its teaching;
ii) *research* activities on both the theory and practice of adult education.

In a nutshell, a Polyvalent Adult Education Centre is *different* from the usual educational institutions (both school and out-of-school) in that it is *more* than an educational enterprise and represents a combination of *educational* and *non-educational* inputs.

3. PROGRAMME PLANNING

The planning of a programme—which corresponds to the principles listed in the previous chapter (i.e. an integrated, continuing, functional, tailor-made, flexible, individualized programme), involves the following steps :

i) identification of objectives and problems (both personal and collective);
ii) identification of needs in the community at large;
iii) identification of groups that need education or training;
iv) analysis of the human, physical, technical, cultural or natural environment (or "milieu");
v) analysis of job requirements;
vi) transposition of identified objectives and needs into educational "subjects";
vii) development of an integrated curriculum;
viii) selection and training of part-time staff;
ix) selection of methods and materials;
x) procuring instructional equipment;
xi) conducting the courses;
xii) evaluation and feed-back;
xiii) research.

The identification of the objectives, problems, needs and groups (points (i) to (iv) :

A functional, tailor-made programme must be based on a particular study of a given situation. Several methods can be used :
—analysis of objectives and aims in a determined society, community, etc.

—surveys among the industries, labour unions, government employment authorities and municipal authorities, etc.

—interviews with responsible officials of enterprises, administration, non-governmental organizations, etc.

—studies conducted by outside organizations such as universities, research institutes, etc. of the problems which are hampering the realization of aims and desires;

—questionnaires which endeavour to obtain basic information on industrial structures, the kinds of skills (and levels) required of workers, the existing educational and training programmes, etc.

—interviews with prospective participants, on an individual or group basis to identify their needs;

—announcements made by the Centre to potential participants concerning programmes (lectures, studies, courses, training facilities, self-learning facilities, etc.) and directed to their needs in order to offer them the possibility of making a choice of programmes and subjects.

In this way the courses offered by the Centre can reflect the attempt to coordinate the participants' needs and wishes with the objectives and aims of the socio-economic community at large. It goes without saying that it is not always possible to meet all needs and it is therefore necessary to be *selective* and, in consultation with those concerned with the programme, make necessary *choices*. There are limitations of time, budget, convenience of both the workers and the sponsoring agency. Selection must therefore be made from within the priority of objectives, needs and aspirations.

Determining job requirements (point v) :

Vocational training requires additional preparation. Once a group of participants interested in a specific form of technical vocational training has been formed, the staff of the Centre should determine the job requirement level, i.e. what the participant belonging to a group is expected to do and at what level of competence or "output" he is expected to be. This could be obtained through a job description or job analysis or by getting a statement of the tasks to be performed. In most instances, such a statement could be obtained from the enterprises or those who have sponsored the workers in a particular course. It is, however, important that in the analysis of the job requirements, the participant, his immediate job supervisor, and his trainer be involved. For some kinds of technical and specialized tasks, outside specialists may also have to be consulted in the process. The attainment level expected of the participants at the end of the study programme should be formally stated. A performance test (having the participants try to do the formally described job) can be used to determine the level at which training should start.

"Translation" of objectives into educational curricula (points vi and vii) :

These two steps of the programming process are the most difficult and require the maximum of innovation. This is where the *diversification* of subjects-matters comes into the picture. This is where the *disaggregation* of traditional curricula should be realized. This is where a "subject-centred" programme should be replaced by a *"problem-centred"* one (instead of taking a "parallel" form, the curricula takes the form of "concentric circles").

In such a type of integrated approach to adult education programmes, there is room and indeed need (according to the "profile" and "level" of the adult learners, as well as according to the variety of "situations" and "milieux") for literacy skills, for general education, vocational training, professional skills, calculating or measuring skills, psychology, economic, civic education, book-keeping, aesthetic education, development of value judgements, acquisition of attitudes, training of technical abilities, etc. The inter-relation of all these, and other, subjects has to be done in several different ways which correspond less to scholastic "pedagogical norms", but rather to "real situations".

Training of part-time staff (point viii) :

The use of part-time 'specialists'—drawn from a variety of professional and skilled occupations but who are not teachers by profession-imposes on the Centre the obligation of providing 'orientation courses' in adult education methods and techniques, particularly in view of the fact that many specialists, although well-acquainted with the subject, are not capable of transmitting their knowledge, skill and experience. These courses will vary in length and design, depending on the purpose. The orientation course usually takes the form of workshops or seminars, and facilities should be provided for refresher courses and individual consultations with the educational specialists of the full-time staff. As the Centre develops, staff training should become an important and dynamic part of its activities. It should be undertaken by a team of full-time staff members including the organizers, educational specialists, psychologists, etc. There should also be close cooperation with the methodological research unit attached to the centre and with universities and other educational institutes working in adult education. In this connection, it should be said that Polyvalent centres mainly serve the adult who is a part-time learner. Therefore, all programmes and courses are organized on a part-time basis in such a way as to be convenient, in terms of time and place, to both the participants and those who sponsor them. The fact that they are part-time students will have other significant implications in the attitudes of the educational staff, in the selection of methods and teaching materials. Adult learners are significantly different from children and youth in terms of personality, physical development, experience and social roles. Those

participating in the polyvalent educational courses are usually in employment and have therefore completed a full day's work before commencing their classes. All these factors must be taken into consideration when planning programmes and selecting teaching materials.

Selection of teaching-learning methods, materials and equipment (points ix and x) :

The methods and materials may have to be directly related to the content of the programme, the educational level of participants, the duration of the course, etc. There are diverse ways in which people learn and a combination of approaches may be necessary in order to accomplish the purpose. The teaching-learning materials will vary from course to course and frequently have to be specially prepared by the instructors or organizers of the course in the form of mimeographed notes, charts, graphs, sketches, maps, designs, models, etc. and provided to participants. Two principles have to be observed : firstly, methods and means are not an independent dimension in the learning process, but should correspond closely to the *content* and to the *profile of the learners*; secondly, methods and means should always activate the adult learner, who is not the object, but the *subject* of the educational process.

Use of blackboards, models, films, filmstrips, overhead projector and other audio-visual aids may be helpful in the process of teaching and learning. When laboratory or workshop equipment is needed, special arrangements should be made with cooperating enterprises, secondary schools or appropriate technical institutes, cooperative trade unions, etc. in this area.

Conducting the programmes (point xi) :

The first "rule" for conducting a polyvalent, functional adult education activity is that there is not a "mono"-form. The need for a *variety of forms* is a necessary prerequisite for educational success with adults : discussions, debates, field activities, practical work, formal and informal training, lectures, seminars, "panels", courses, group work, clubs, workshops, shows, exhibitions, hobby activities, leisure-time facilities, self-study, etc.

The Second "rule" concerns the quite new teacher-learner relationship. In a modern adult education institution, the teacher has a modified role (he is at the same time a learner); the learner is not someone who is ignorant and merely expects to be "taught" (he brings with him his past experience, the richness of his personality, the value of his judgement—he becomes a partner in the educational process). It is difficult to foresee the exact forms—but it is necessary to profit from and apply the findings of adult psychology, of group dynamics, of professional relations, of industrial psychology, of micro-sociological studies, of adult pedagogy, etc.

The whole programming process can loose its efficacity if the course is not carefully prepared and supervised. The actual conducting of the course will include a suitable physical arrangement for the classes, adequate lighting, equipment, audio-visual aids, teaching materials, etc. Starting on time, keeping a record of attendance, and following regular time schedules for conducting the class sessions are imperative.

Evaluation research and feedback (points xii and xiii) :

Evaluation has in fact three objectives : a) to determine if improvements need to be made in any of the components of the programme : curriculum, instructors, teaching methods and materials, or the overall planning of the programme; b) to determine if the programme has indeed met the main objectives; and c) to measure the impact (socio-economic, educational, professional, etc.) of the programme on the community's or the learner's level. This is why the evaluation process has to be part of the on-going operations.

Evaluation techniques usually used are : tests (pre-test and post-test); interviews; questionnaires; records (follow-up and performance records); analysis of statistical data or other informative materials; continuous contacts; case studies, etc.

It is important that in the process of evaluation the trainee, the trainer, and his immediate supervisors all be involved. The result of the evaluation should not only be made known to the participants and those concerned with the course development and programming, but should also be shared with those who supervise and those who are involved in providing funds.

If the need for action research is felt, its objectives could be :

1. to develop and continually revise methods of identifying educational needs as well as of evaluating pedagogical methods, student performance, efficacity of part-time staff, results of training programmes, etc.
2. to experiment and study the result of experiments with new methods with the introduction of educational technology, etc.

It is necessary to keep the research unit in close touch with universities and other research institutes, drawing on their resources and specialists when necessary.

4. STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

The organization of a Polyvalent Education Centre will be determined by local needs, which should be reflected in the selection of the staff and in the content of the courses offered, in the use of community resources, and in the involvement of groups whose interest and needs the Centre serves. It is important that patterns of coordination be established between, on the one hand, other educational institutes and, on the other, various departments of government, trade unions, management, productivity councils and other such organizations.

The Centre does not need to maintain a large establishment, a big capital outlay, workshops, laboratories, and a number of classrooms of its own. Nor does it need to employ a large number of full-time staff members. Courses and other educational activities can be organized at places convenient to the workers—such as in factories, in trade union buildings, in school buildings during off-school hours, at community or welfare centres.

Full-time staff

The size of the staff will depend on the size of the Centre and the extent of the programme. The responsibilities of the permanent staff should include :

a) conducting surveys and studies into educational needs, training requirements, and general interests of workers;
b) planning the programme of the courses and developing the curriculum for each course;
c) organizing and supervising courses;
d) recruiting part-time instructors and teachers;
e) training the part-time staff;
f) preparing teaching materials;
g) providing library and documentary services;
h) carrying out administrative and clerical services.

Part-time staff

In addition to the full-time staff, this type of adult education institution, will engage on a part-time basis, according to the teaching requirements in each course, the professional experts and specialists working in different fields as instructors. It will select competent and experienced people from among the engineers, demonstrators, foremen, teachers and professors who may be working full-time elsewhere, to teach on a part-time basis in its courses. Using part-time staff ensures that a large number of workers can be catered to; it also helps to maintain a direct relationship with the industries, the economic enterprises, and community organizations where support for the Centre is essential.

Financing

Methods of financing a Polyvalent Centre will differ from country to country. For example, in Yugoslavia, similar centres called Workers' and People's Universities have a mixed system of financing (partly from the municipality and partly self-supporting) in India, the Bombay Shramik Vidyapeeth, at present supported by the central government, aims in the future to draw part of its financial resources from participating industries, and trade unions, etc. in the area and to some extent from the participants

themselves. In Cuba, the new centre at Cienfuegos is, and will be, completely government financed.

As a generalization, it is desirable that the central or local government, at least in the initial stages, provide funds for the establishment of the Centre and for expenditures such as the salaries of the full-time employed staff, rent for the premises, transport, etc. The state should continue to support the Centre until the time it is able to develop other methods of self-support and self-financing, if it is so desired. When the courses of the Centre begin to demonstrate their functional value both to the employers or those who supervise the workers and to the workers who participate in these courses, there is a case for getting financial support from the local community and/or from employers—whether they belong to private or public sectors. Employers could reimburse fees, help to provide for or donate teaching-learning materials, permit the use of furnished classroom facilities in their own premises, or furnish their tools, machines and workshops, etc., for teaching purposes. They are sometimes prepared also to appoint members of their professional staff to teach in the courses on a part-time basis, and arrange the necessary transport for bringing the outside instructors to the class sessions. The participants in these courses themselves are sometimes asked to contribute a nominal fee, once they consider that enrolment in such courses will bring about material and social changes in their situations.

Governing organ of the Polyvalent Education Centre

Polyvalent Education Centres are generally governed by a 'board' or a 'committee' consisting of members representing the "polyvalent interests" of the local community such as industry, labour, universities, relevant department of the government, administration, municipal corporation, trade unions, etc. This 'board' must also assure an active liaison between the various bodies concerned. They should meet at regular intervals and the director of the Centre should be in close contact with the president of the board (usually elected).

The above description of the principles of the operation of Polyvalent Centre are generic and reflect the practices and ideas from a number of different Centres. An attempt has been made to show the multifaceted character of a Polyvalent Adult Education Centre and its many sided operational objectives. However, the form of any individual Centre, whether in urban and industrial setting or rural and agricultural setting, will, as it has been said before, take its identity from local needs and resources.

This description is meant to stimulate ideas and give the basic principles of Polyvalent Adult Education to those educators and administrators interested in establishing similar Centres.

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